

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Mike Honda (D-CA) issued the following statement on:

"As the nation reflects upon the State of the Union, the needs and concerns of the Asian and Pacific Islander American (APIA) communities must not be forgotten. APIA communities are in need of greater resources and attention from the Administration and Congress.

"At least 17.7% of all Asian Americans and 21.8% of Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders do not have health insurance compared to 11.2% of non-Hispanic whites. This represents a total of 2.3 million APIAs who are without health care coverage. Studies show that as many as 54% of Korean American, and 32% of Vietnamese American adults, age 18-64, are uninsured, compared to 15% of the total population. APIAs are also less likely than white Americans to have job-based health insurance coverage.

"In education, APIA students are still underserved, and 24.7% of the APIA population is linguistically isolated. When disaggregated, the percentages are even greater in the Southeast Asian community: 45% of Vietnamese Americans, 31.8% of Cambodian and Laotian Americans, and 35.1% of Hmong Americans are linguistically isolated.

"While the APIA community as a whole has a higher rate of individuals holding a bachelor's degree (BA), (i.e. 38% compared to 21% of the general population), Southeast Asians have significantly lower percentages of individuals holding a BA. Only 17% of Vietnamese Americans, 7% of Laotian Americans, 6% of Cambodian Americans, and 3% of Hmong Americans hold BAs. Furthermore, 23.6% of Cambodian Americans and 30.8% of Laotian Americans, age 25 and over, have had no formal schooling. These numbers are compared to the 1.7% of all Americans, age 25 and over, who have had no formal schooling.

"On the immigration front, 1.5 million APIAs are currently caught in the immigration backlog for family visas. We need to enact true comprehensive immigration reform to reunite families that have been waiting for as long as 22 years. We must also restore due process, prosecutorial discretion, judicial review, and respect for civil liberties in the immigration system.

"With respect to the military, there are 62,378 APIAs who are on active duty in the military,

disproportionately constituting 4.5% of those on active duty. There are also 7,904 APIAs who are currently deployed in the global war on terrorism. Active duty members are also disproportionately racial minorities. 35.9%, or 492,735, of active duty members identify themselves as racial minorities. We must ensure that our brave men and women in uniform have the resources they need to do their jobs. At the same time, our country needs a new direction in Iraq in order to bring our troops home as soon as possible.

"Furthermore, we have an obligation to uphold our promises to those who have valiantly served in our nation's military. During World War II, more than 200,000 Filipino soldiers served alongside U.S. troops, making vital contributions to the defeat of Japan. The American government promised that all Filipino soldiers who fought under the Stars and Stripes would be treated as American veterans with full benefits. In 1946, in one of its least decorous acts, Congress rescinded this promise. The time has come to recognize Filipino soldiers as full U.S. veterans, making this aging population eligible for U.S. veterans' benefits, including access to quality medical care at Veterans Affairs facilities.

"As Chair of CAPAC, I urge this Administration and Members of the 110th Congress to make these issues a priority. I will work with other Members of Congress, particularly with Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Congressional Black Caucus, to ensure that we enact comprehensive immigration reform, make healthcare affordable, and provide educational and economic security for all American families. I also welcome President Bush's call for bipartisan efforts and hope that the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders will work with us to address these issues."